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## Ontario Rural Dialogue 2001

Ridgetown Session  
June 25, 2001

CANADIAN RURAL PARTNERSHIP

RURAL DIALOGUE

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A very faint, blurry background image of a rural scene. It appears to be a landscape with a building, possibly a barn or house, and some trees. The image is out of focus and serves as a subtle backdrop for the text.

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**Ontario  
Rural Dialogue 2001**

**Ridgetown Session  
June 25, 2001**

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We wish to acknowledge the contributions made by the rural citizens from Ridgetown and the surrounding area who participated in the Ontario Rural Dialogue 2001. Their thoughtful discussions and insights made it possible to identify rural assets most valued in that part of Ontario and strategies that should be adopted to sustain them. Our thanks go to the local coordinators and the local steering committee members for bringing together a diverse group of participants and for planning a successful dialogue session. Thanks are also due to Ridgetown College for making facilities available to the session, the Ontario Agricultural Training Institute for the overall coordination of the dialogue session, and to PEOPLEnergy and the local facilitators for the facilitation of the session. The dialogue session would not have been possible without the generous funding provided by Human Resources Development Canada, Health Canada, Federal Economic Development Initiatives in Northern Ontario, and Public Works and Government Services Canada. We sincerely appreciate their generosity.

The Ontario Rural Dialogue 2001 is an initiative of the Rural Secretariat of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, and Rural Team-Ontario. The partners in the endeavour were the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, the Ontario Rural Council and the University of Guelph. A heartfelt thank you goes to our partners.

## FOREWORD

A total of six Ontario Rural Dialogue 2001 sessions were held — Kemptville (eastern Ontario), Alfred (Francophone), Ridgetown (southwestern Ontario), Guelph (central Ontario), New Liskeard (northeastern Ontario), and Emo (northwestern Ontario) — during June and July 2001.

This document is a record of discussions that took place at the Ontario Rural Dialogue 2001 session in Ridgetown on June 25, 2001. Many of the discussions took place in brainstorming sessions at which no limits were placed on the participants. Views expressed do not necessarily represent those of the Government of Canada. In order to present a true report of the free-ranging discussions, recommendations made by participants that fall outside federal jurisdiction are also included. Participant recommendations contained in this report are recorded as they were heard. We thank session participants for their comments.

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# Ontario Rural Dialogue 2001

## Ridgetown Session

### Executive Summary

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#### Introduction

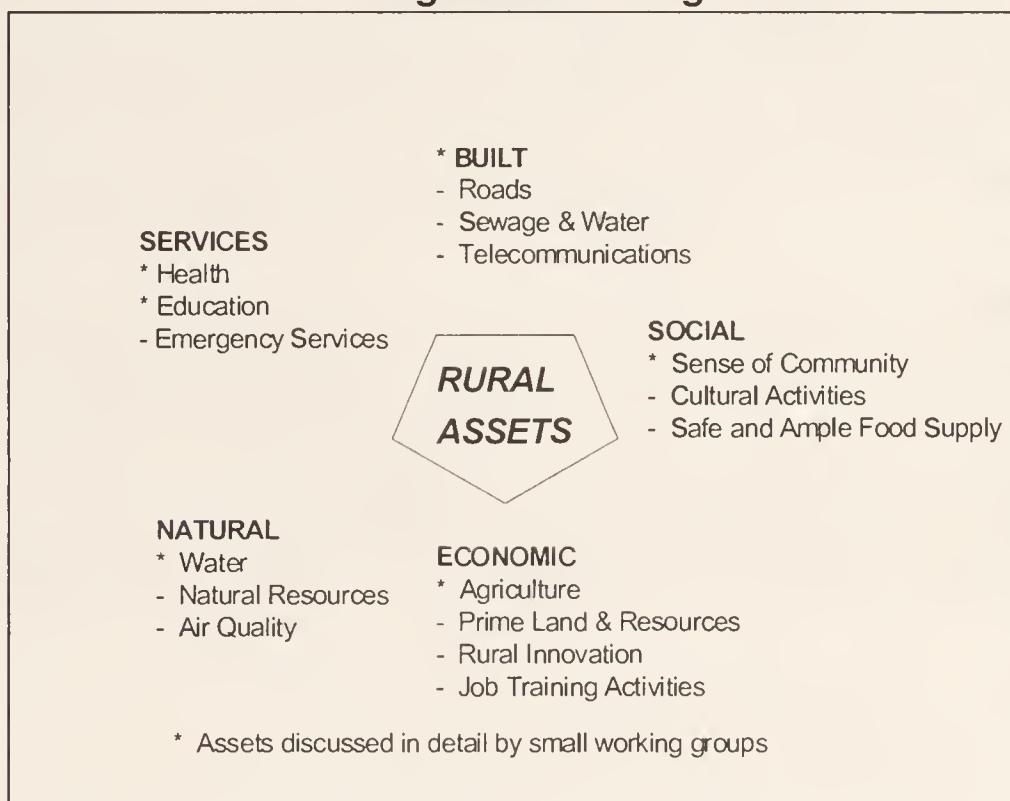
The third of the six Ontario Rural Dialogue 2001 sessions was held in southwestern Ontario. Sixty-eight rural residents, from a variety of age groups, interests and occupational categories met in Ridgetown on June 25, 2001, to discuss positive perspectives on rural values and priorities as part of the Ontario Rural Dialogue process.

#### The Assets Approach to Valuing Rural Ontario

An **assets-based approach** was used to enable participants to focus on the strengths and resources of rural and remote communities and to identify threats to these assets. Participants then discussed positive strategies for citizen and government action to sustain key assets.

Participants identified and defined the key rural assets within **five asset bundles — built (infrastructure), social, economic, natural, and services**. The following diagram identifies the key rural assets in each asset bundle.

**Assets Wheel**  
**Ontario Rural Dialogue 2001: Ridgetown Session**



Through a discussion and voting process, the Ridgetown participants identified the key rural assets they value most: **water, natural economic resources, air quality, agriculture, balanced ecosystem, health, prime land and resources, sense of community, education and training.**

## **Participant Recommendations**

After meeting with their focus groups, participants came together to present strategies to utilize resources and mitigate threats in order to sustain the identified assets. By voting, the group identified the following strategies as most significant.

### **Citizen Strategies**

- Farm organizations to develop one strong voice to politicians on key issues/strategies
- Work toward long-term vision and planning
- Proactively promote agriculture awareness to media, consumers, and local politicians
- Continue to support, recognize and reward volunteerism as a way of life
- Develop a strong public relations strategy for agriculture
- Develop community health centres specific to community

### **Government Strategies**

- Encourage stewardship at all levels
- Maintain accessible universal health care – no two tier
- Promote the federal agriculture vision and policy – the three “c’s” for agriculture, “clear, concise, consistent”
- Define minimum level of basic services
- Fund community adoption of proven pilot projects
- Coordinate all levels of government and reduce red tape for training programs

# Ontario Rural Dialogue 2001

## Ridgetown Session

Date: June 25, 2001

Location: Ridgetown College

### Introduction

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The third of the six Ontario Rural Dialogue 2001 sessions was held in southwestern Ontario. Sixty-eight rural residents from a variety of age groups, interests and occupational categories met in Ridgetown on June 25, 2001, to discuss positive perspectives on rural values and priorities as part of the Ontario Rural Dialogue process. A demographic profile of participants is presented in Appendix A. After first identifying the key rural assets (strengths) of the region, the participants discussed the resources that sustain the assets and the threats that may affect them. Participants then identified citizen and government strategies to sustain the assets for the future.

### The Rural Dialogue Process

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In 1998, the federal government launched the Canadian Rural Partnership (CRP) to support community development by adopting new approaches and practices that respond to rural and remote development issues.

The Rural Dialogue is a key citizen-engagement component of CRP. It is an ongoing, two-way discussion between the federal government and Canadians from rural and remote regions. The dialogue helps the federal government understand local and regional challenges and opportunities, and it also provides rural and remote citizens with an opportunity to influence federal government decision-making on policies and programs.

The Ontario Rural Dialogue 2001 process was designed to continue this dialogue. It was led by the Rural Secretariat of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and Rural Team-Ontario (RT-O), representing many federal departments and provincial ministries. Other partners were the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA); The Ontario Rural Council (TORC); and the University of Guelph (UoG). Funding for the dialogue was provided by Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC), Health Canada (HC), the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario (FedNor), and Public Works and Government Services Canada (PWGSC).

# Overview of the Assets Approach

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**Assets are what we want to keep, build upon and sustain for future generations.**

Assessing and measuring rural assets is a **positive way** of valuing what we have and want to keep in rural Canada. Using an assets approach allows us to generate a total picture of the features and characteristics of rural life that are most valued by rural citizens. The information acquired in this data-gathering approach identifies and affirms what we **all** think is important about rural life. It becomes vital information for political and strategic representation of the “rural.” Asset building connects people to a common cause. It brings us together, focuses our attention and points us in the same direction.

The assets approach is both positive and inclusive:

- Rural assets sustain livelihoods, in both rural **and** urban areas.
- Assets include both **public and private** goods.

The traditional way of identifying important areas for action has been through a needs assessment process. This approach identifies “problems” — areas that need attention because something is wrong or missing. In contrast, the assets approach emphasizes positives to identify resources on which to build.

A common concern about the assets approach is that it does not sufficiently acknowledge legitimate rural needs. This, however, is not the case. What appear as “needs” in the needs assessment approach appear as “assets” that are threatened in the assets approach, or as resources that are not being utilized. (For example, low levels of employment in the assets approach are considered to be an asset of a population available to work.) Thus, the assets approach does identify “needs,” but considers them in the context of the larger resource pool. This enables participants to recognize the value of all of the assets in rural areas and to identify strategies to sustain the most important assets, rather than focusing solely on the assets that appear to be most threatened at the time.

Assets are usually measured by calculating the total value of goods and services produced in rural areas. Such assets are mathematical and can be expressed as gross domestic product (GDP). The assets approach adds the view of what is important about rural Canada from the perspective of the rural population, the people who live and work amid the rural assets themselves.

**In summary, rural assets are those popularly recognized attributes of rural areas that are considered essential for the maintenance of livelihoods, both rural and urban, and vital to sustainability of the economy, society, and the environment in rural Canada.**

# Rural Assets Ranking

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The process of identifying assets is new to most people. Over the past 30 years, processes for determining priorities for action have emphasized identifying needs. The needs assessment approach focuses on problems and negatives. The assets approach helps people focus on positives, while including the total picture of both positives and negatives.

It takes time to adjust to this new way of thinking. To enable participants to work in this new method of focusing on positives, the valuing of identified assets occurred in several stages. For details of the process, see **Appendix B**.

## Individual Rural Asset Ranking

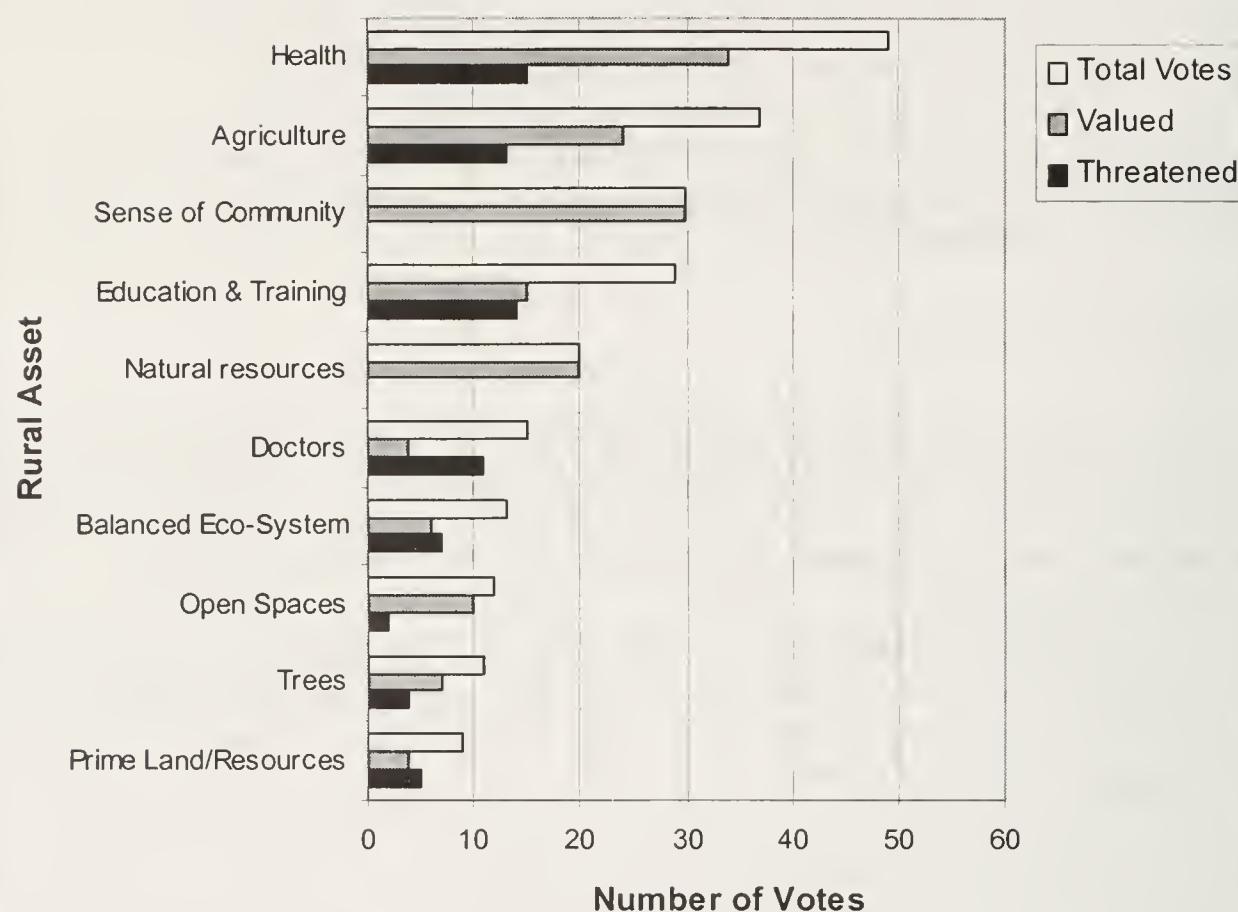
Over the course of the day, participants established, in several ways, the relative value of the assets they had identified. After the initial morning discussions, participants were asked to individually rank the assets on separate forms. **Individual asset ranking percentages are reported under each key rural asset discussed by small working groups.**

Because there is significant overlap in the definition of rural assets, they cannot be ranked precisely. For example, water and health, two commonly identified rural assets, are frequently cited in reference to the same issues. Therefore, it is matter of judgement whether the two should be considered one asset or two.

## Large-group Rural Asset Ranking

Before the individual asset ranking, participants valued the rural assets through a large-group “assets voting” process, using blue and red dots (see Appendix C for results). This enabled participants to consider the relative value of the assets that they had identified, and the extent to which they were valued (blue dots) or threatened (red dots). The following graph represents the top ten assets that were identified by the large-group asset voting process. It shows the total number of votes as well as the breakdown of assets that are considered to be valued and threatened.

## TOP TEN ASSETS IDENTIFIED AT RIDGETOWN SESSION



## Strategies for Sustaining Key Rural Assets

Citizen and government strategies developed by the Rural Dialogue participants for the key rural assets discussed in detail by small working groups are listed in the following pages. Individual and large group asset ranking, definitions for assets, resources sustaining the assets and threats to the assets identified by participants are found in Appendix D.

## Health

### Citizen Strategies

Participants identified the following two strategies as most significant for local citizens:

- 1) Develop community health centres specific to community
- 2) Promote healthy lifestyles: diet/food, physical education, should be part of school curriculum (also includes government participation)

Other citizen strategies:

- Establish clinics (walk-in) to help bring doctors, nurses and practitioners to the area. They can have labs, x-ray facilities and physiotherapy to provide an alternative to the hospital. Provide equipment, rent, monetary and other incentives (can be assisted at government level)
- Develop programs to bring medical students to rural community – junior mentoring
- Develop volunteer driving programs
- Broadcast community service announcements on radio
- Band together – government needs to respond and listen
- Be proactive and adopt a change in attitude

## **Government Strategies**

Participants identified the following two strategies as most significant for government action:

- 1) Provide incentives to recruit health care professionals
- 2) Maintain accessible universal health care (no two tier)

Other government strategies:

- Open more spots in schools
- Provide tuition incentives to assist future students in medicine
- Set up satellite medical schools (University of Windsor)
- Make physical education a compulsory part of curriculum in high school
- Have storefront public health nurse in each community – referrals to dental
- Make services available in more than just the “hub” (central areas)
- Ensure media communication of public health issues
- Include dental in universal health care
- Protect Canadian health care system

# **Agriculture**

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## **Citizen Strategies**

Participants identified the following two strategies as most significant for local citizens:

- 1) Develop a strong public relations strategy for agriculture
- 2) Proactively promote agricultural awareness to media, consumers, and local politicians

Other citizen strategies:

- Reward the agricultural community for on-farm research; value-added agricultural production; environmental stewardship of air, water, land; entrepreneurial development (small business)
- Develop long-term strategy around safety nets
- Educate consumers to the strength and value of agriculture goods produced in Canada. Buy Canadian, know Canadian and Ontario produced foods and products

## Government Strategies

Participants identified the following two strategies as most significant for government action:

- 1) Promote the three “c’s” for agriculture, “clear, concise and consistent.”
- 2) Develop a clear federal vision for Canadian agriculture.

Other government strategies:

- Develop policy in partnership with agriculture and rural communities, organizations. Joint policy planning and delivery
- Funnel all federal policy through Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada for acceptance and appropriateness for rural communities

## Water

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### Citizen Strategies

Participants identified the following two strategies as most significant for local citizens:

- 1) Change/educate societal expectations (road conditions, packaging)
- 2) Encourage stewardship at all levels

Other citizen strategies:

- Expand educational awareness
- Promote personal responsibility for property – responsible stewardship
- Introduce stewardship at young level – youth involvement in schools and youth groups
- Involve community in stewardship
- Recognize that a problem cannot be solved by the people or thinking that created the problem
- Explore alternative use of manure and water use in farming practices
- Educate financial lenders, i.e., Farm Credit Corporation about importance of stewardship initiatives, e.g., marshland reclamation
- Discourage herbicide/pesticide cosmetic use/selective
- Recognize citizen rights – no spray – responsibility of owner to control weeds by other means
- Change society’s expectations and educate, i.e., travel conditions vary; snow in winter is not the same road conditions as summer

### Government Strategies

Participants identified the following two strategies as most significant for government action:

- 1) Develop enforceable legislation – water levy, pollution control
- 2) Provide compensation for farmland reclamation – stakeholders, i.e., government, banks, industry, and individuals

Other government strategies:

- Resources to enforce the law
- Revisit emission standards policy on all water craft
- Implement long-term resource management policies at government level

- Require more industry responsibility for packaging – industry become more environmental, i.e., too much throwaway packaging
- Pursue a deposit/return policy for refundable bottles/plastic – incentive needed for industry to do this
- Require accountability of actions at all levels
- Provide Incentive for industry to recycle water used in processing
- Take from other countries strategies that work on best management
- Initiate a water levy – rural and urban
- Implement responsible land use policies with longer term vision
- Support research in environmental uses/alternatives
- Hold firm on export of fresh Canadian water; keep our resources
- Protect marginal land and marshland as such as they act as a water filter
- Support research in alternative treatment of septic systems

## **Education and Training**

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### **Citizen Strategies**

Participants identified the following five strategies as most significant for local citizens:

- 1) Encourage partnerships for collaborative non-traditional learning opportunities
- 2) Empower learning communities focused on the learner
- 3) Establish specific local accessible training programs
- 4) Develop a skills sharing network
- 5) Develop an information exchange strategy and centre (training and job opportunities)

Other citizen strategies:

- Integrate formal and informal education into a learning community
- Promote the value and participation in continuous learning
- Establish social marketing program and vision
- Control curriculum regionally
- Connect the individual to various aspects of learning – kindergarten, youth programs, secondary school, private alternatives, peer, mentors, workshops, clubs, courses
- Promote and broaden rural youth learning opportunities to develop experiences and learning habits
- Encourage school and business partnerships to create/develop target skills modules and expand beyond school system

### **Government Strategies**

Participants identified the following three strategies as most significant for government action:

- 1) Fund community adoption of proven pilot projects
- 2) Broaden accessibility to rural youth learning opportunities
- 3) Coordinate all levels of government and reduce red tape for training programs

Other government strategies:

- Develop rural youth job strategy
- Establish office of learning technologies

## Sense of Community

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### Citizen Strategies

Participants identified the following two strategies as most significant for local citizens:

- 1) Continue to support, recognize, and reward volunteerism as a way of life
- 2) Build partnerships and encourage community support

Other citizen strategies:

- Increase private sector participation and philanthropy
- Build partnerships: event organization, volunteers
- Implement user pay fees
- Increase communication and marketing: awareness, promotion
- Preserve local autonomy while encouraging participation as a large community; maintain smaller community events, fairs, parades, etc.; encourage town hall discussion and dialogue
- Maintain local chamber of commerce with addition of Association of Chambers with larger voice
- Share successes and collaborate

### Government Strategies

Participants identified the following two strategies as most significant for government action:

- 1) Increase financial and human resources at all levels
- 2) Develop programs to maintain and build a sense of community

Other government strategies:

- Explore sources of funding – government all levels, operations, projects, capital
- Increase access to knowledge and information; connecting Canadians, Community Access Program (CAP) sites, Ontario Screening Initiative (OSI) training, print materials
- Reward community initiatives and innovation; by longer funding supports, more local government driven, recognition of activities, they drive the show
- Provide tax incentive for voluntary work and relief of expenses

# Basic Infrastructure

## Citizen Strategies

Participants identified the following strategy as most significant for local citizens:

- 1) Work toward long-term vision and planning

Other citizen strategies:

- Make government aware of the barriers and regional/local inequities (lobby)
- Encourage government and people to work together for long-term planning, vision and budget
- Educate people about the planning process and involve them in long-term process
- Encourage participation in infrastructure planning
- Maximize and use the existing infrastructure more efficiently: low versus peak periods
- Establish alternative sources, uses, technologies – recycling water for individual use, etc.
- Educate citizens to save power and show where the savings are
- Educate citizens on who to talk to

## Government Strategies

Participants identified the following two strategies as most significant for government action:

- 1) Encourage innovative private and public partnerships
- 2) Define minimum level of service

Other government strategies:

- Listen to the people
- Consult with local people
- Take into account density when distributing money for infrastructure funding
- Address funding distribution
- Plan for the long-term
- Establish more direct link between user group contributions and monies devoted to infrastructure improvement, i.e., portion of gas tax going to general fund
- Differentiate between projects for broader good of province as a whole and user group requirements
- Use long-term funding mechanism for future planning – rather than on immediate projects, consideration should be given to repair and maintenance
- Set up reserves
- Encourage innovative private and public partnerships for alternative delivery or development
- Make sure voices are heard (ongoing discussion)
- Encourage fair and equitable sharing between every level of government that addresses inequities of rural areas: ability to pay, population, assessments base, and density
- Don't apply urban models in a rural setting: no cookie cutter approach
- Add more of a rural focus and priority to all levels of government
- Develop a Mission Statement for rural Canada with a long-term vision

# Recommendations

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Near the end of the day, participants gathered to present the strategies recommended by the five focus groups. Participants then voted individually on what they believed to be the best three citizen and government strategies overall.

## Citizen Strategies

- Farm organizations to develop one strong voice to politicians on key issues/strategies
- Work toward long-term vision and planning
- Proactively promote agriculture awareness to media, consumers and local politicians
- Continue to support, recognize and reward volunteerism as a way of life
- Develop a strong public relations strategy for agriculture

## Government Strategies

- Develop community health centres specific to community
- Encourage stewardship at all levels
- Maintain accessible universal health care – no two tier
- Promote the federal agriculture vision and policy – the three “c’s” for agriculture, “clear, concise, consistent”
- Define minimum level of basic services
- Fund community adoption of proven pilot projects
- Coordinate all levels of government and reduce red tape for training programs

## Common Themes

- Self help, grassroots
- Long-term investment
- Strategic and innovative partnership and flexibility
- Education
- Money from the government/government to invest in rural/some “in kind”
- Exchange
- Stewardship
- Local and responsible decision making
- Broad and equal access
- Volunteerism
- Proactive actions
- Uniqueness
- Don’t let short-term economic development get in the way of opportunities

## **Next Steps**

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The Ontario Rural Dialogue 2001 sessions took place in six regions across Ontario. Information from all six sessions will be amalgamated and analyzed to develop a comprehensive picture of the assets valued by citizens in rural Ontario. Results of this larger analysis and the information from the Ontario Regional Rural Conference 2001 held in North Bay, Ontario, August 26-28, 2001, will be incorporated into a final report.

The final report will reflect a comprehensive portrait of key rural assets in Ontario along with the strategies recommended by conference participants.

## Appendix A: Demographic Profile of Participants

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The Rural Dialogue process is designed to be inclusive of the range of citizens living in rural Ontario. Enough demographic information was collected from participants to identify the diversity of participants and to verify the ideas expressed by specific groups, such as farmers and youth. The following numbers are based on the 55 completed profile forms returned by participants.

Demographic features of the Ridgetown session:

- ⇒ 58% (32 of 55) of participants were female, 42% were male
- ⇒ 58% of participants were 50 years or older, 9% were youth (15-29)
- ⇒ 42% of participants live on farms, 24% live in rural non-farm residences and 20% live in towns under 25,000 population
- ⇒ 83% of participants have lived in their local area for at least 10 years
- ⇒ 34.5% of participants listed **farming** as their primary or secondary occupation
- ⇒ 27% of participants listed **government** as their primary or secondary occupation
- ⇒ 23% of participants listed **voluntary/non-profit** as their primary or secondary occupation
- ⇒ 18% of participants listed **business or commerce** as their primary or secondary occupation
- ⇒ 14% of participants listed **social services** as their primary or secondary occupation
- ⇒ 13% of participants listed **education** as their primary or secondary occupation
- ⇒ 76% of participants reported total household incomes of over \$40,000

Overall, a diverse group of rural citizens participated in the Rural Dialogue at Ridgetown.

## Appendix B: The Process of Valuing Assets in Rural Ontario

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All the information presented by participants was gathered together in a “data set,” which includes information both from and about the participants. Information from all six dialogue sessions will be amalgamated and analyzed to develop a comprehensive picture of the assets valued by citizens in rural Ontario.

- ⇒ **Participant Profile:** As part of the registration process, participants were asked to complete a two-page Participant Profile, which included demographic information. This information will be used to characterize the diversity of participants and to identify the ideas expressed by specific groups, such as farmers and youth.
- ⇒ **Assets Wheel:** Participants created a comprehensive list of the key rural assets under five asset bundles: built (infrastructure), social, economic, natural, and services.
- ⇒ **Assets Voting:** Participants were given seven blue dots to indicate the assets they valued most, and three red dots to indicate the assets they believed to be most threatened at this time. Asset “Voting” Results can be found in **Appendix C**.
- ⇒ **Comprehensive Overview of Key Assets:** The three assets with the most votes in each of the asset bundles were brought to the front of the room and discussed. This enabled participants to think about what fellow rural residents valued as rural assets.
- ⇒ **Assets Ranking:** Following the group discussion, participants were given a second opportunity to rank rural assets. Participants were asked to identify the five assets that they, as individuals, valued the most. These asset rankings were collected on individual sheets.
- ⇒ **Asset Working Groups:** Participants then selected working groups to discuss the characteristics and issues surrounding a particular asset. Working group discussions were organized around the following:
  - ⇒ **Asset Definition**
  - ⇒ **Resources Sustaining the Asset**
  - ⇒ **Threats to Sustaining the Asset**
  - ⇒ **Recommended Citizen Strategies for Sustaining the Asset**
  - ⇒ **Recommended Government Strategies for Sustaining the Asset**
- ⇒ **Large-group Recommendations:** At the end of the day, the focus group presented its recommendations for government and citizens. All the participants voted on their top three citizen strategies and top three government strategies.

## Appendix C: Asset “Voting” Results

During the morning session, participants were asked to identify, and then vote on, the rural assets they believed to be most important to rural lives. Participants were given seven blue dots to indicate the assets they valued most, and an additional three red dots to indicate the assets they believed were most threatened. The totals for all of the assets identified are listed below. The blue dot totals are listed first, separated by a comma from the red dot totals.

### Built

Energy – 3,3  
Railroad – 1,1  
Private economic business/industrial – 3,0  
Marine service building – 0,0  
Heritage sites – 3,0  
Housing – 2,1  
Farm institution, service/building – 2,0  
Roads – 16,10  
Recreation & cultural facility – 3,0  
Sewage and water drainage – 19,3  
Public meeting space  
Library building – 1,0  
Telecommunications – 11,2

### Social

Social events – 0,1  
Youth center – 0, 0  
Good for kids – 0, 0  
Communications lines – 1,0  
Ethnic diversity – 2,0  
Sports programs – 1,0  
Full tummies, safe food supply – 6,0  
Individuality – 0,1  
Support network – 1,0  
Cultural activities – 7,0  
Sense of community – 30,0  
Families – 2,1  
Children’s safety village – 0,1  
Democracy – 2,0  
Security and safety – 5,0

### Services

Transportation – 3,2  
Food deliver – 0,0  
Victoria of Violence – 0,0  
Fire protection – 10, 0  
Policing – 2,1  
Religion – 0,0  
Horticulture services – 0,0  
Museums – 0,0  
Settlement services – 0,0  
Community library – 3,1  
Children’s services – 0,0  
Doctors – 4,11  
Volunteerism, United Way – 6,2  
Rural independence – service  
ourselves – 7,2  
Education and training – 15,14  
Recreation – 2,0

### Economic

Having & sharing resources – 0,0  
Geographical location – 6,0  
Prime land/resources – 4,5  
Niche/global business – 4,0  
Partnership – 0,0  
Import/export of commodities – 0,0  
Basic manual labour – 1,2  
Established markets – 0,0  
Low cost of living – 1,1  
Educated work force – 2,0  
Growth potential – 1,1  
Diversified jobs – 3,0  
Land use planning management – 3,0  
Proximity to foreign markets – 4,0  
Programs for economic development – 3,1  
Tourism – 2,1  
Job training opportunities – 1,5  
Rural innovation – 6,0  
Home based (75% women) – 0,0  
Competition – 1,2  
Agriculture – 24,13

## Appendix D: Key Rural Assets Discussed in Small Working Groups: Definitions/Resources/Threats

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Through a voting process, participants were asked to identify five key rural assets that they, as individuals, valued most from the list of key rural assets identified by the large-group asset voting process.

### Built Infrastructure

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#### Individual Rural Asset Ranking

The group discussed a combination of things related to built infrastructure. The specific issue under this general area that most participants voted for was 'roads'. Roads appeared in the top five individual rural assets ranking for 20% of the participants.

#### Large-group Asset Valuing

Participants gave **Roads** a total of 28 votes:

- 16 blue (valued)
- 12 red (threatened).

#### Definition of "Built Infrastructure"

Participants identified the following meanings associated with "built infrastructure."

- Basic air, water, built roads, sewage, telecommunications, drainage
- Built and importance to well-being of community and public health
- Different infrastructures: transportation network, communication network, services, and treatment
- Primary elements needed in a community

#### Resources Sustaining "Built Infrastructure"

- Fair share of federal and provincial tax
- Build up assessment base; prime agricultural land issue versus development
- User fees/toll roads
- User fees collected now are not going to roads
- No new road growth in rural areas despite population and traffic increase
- Need roads for growth of rural business
- What can we do as a municipality? Per cent spent on roads going down because government is requiring municipality to pay for more services previously funded by province
- Minimum standards for all roads deferred and municipalities require support to at least bring roads up to these standards, taking into account low density/low population
- Telecommunications: broadband, 1 hour speed access fibre

- Must build economic case of service speed
- Equity and access to service such as health care
- Everyone should have access to same level of service
- No incentive for private sector in rural areas to provide telecommunication infrastructure despite government policy to make us most “connected” country in the world.

### Threats to “Built Infrastructure”

- Roads: more money for less service, amalgamation, lack of funding, downloading
- Unable to maintain basic quality
- Low population density, smaller tax base, can't pay for level of service
- Rural roads also serve bigger population, local money paying for usage beyond ability to pay
- Only 400/40 level highways are provided higher level funding

## Education and Training

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### Individual Rural Asset Ranking

Education and/or Training appeared in the top five individual rural assets ranking for 53% of the participants.

### Large-group Asset Valuing

In the initial large-group session, **Education and Training** was identified as the second most significant asset in the “services” asset bundle.

Participants gave “education and training” a total of 29 votes:

- 15 blue (valued)
- 14 red (threatened).

### Definition of “Education and Training”

Participants identified the following meanings associated with “education and training.”

- Self-directed, library, Internet
- Curriculum based
- Elementary and secondary
- Post secondary: Ridgetown College, St. Clair College, University of Western Ontario, University of Windsor, Lambton College, Fanshawe College
- Internships
- Media
- Youth leadership programs
- Extension/technological transformation
- Correspondence

## **Resources Sustaining “Education and Training”**

- School systems: elementary and secondary, post secondary, special agriculturally focused
- Government agencies: OMAFRA, HRDC, Industry Canada
- Libraries
- Internet
- Churches, family, community, each other, salespeople and sales staff
- Commodity groups, associations
- Corporate funding, community funding, provincial and federal funding
- On the job, skills training
- Volunteerism

## **Threats to “Education and Training”**

- Formal system focuses on maintaining the system, not on the student; system dependency, regional importance, agriculture focus, centralization etc. removes rural component.
- Due to dependency on formal system, the importance of volunteer component of informal systems is undervalued, motivation lowered, funding decreased, time commitment decreased.

# **Water**

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## **Individual Rural Asset Ranking**

Water appeared in the top five individual rural assets ranking for 49% of the participants.

## **Large-group Asset Valuing**

In the initial large-group session, Water was identified as the most significant asset in the “natural” asset bundle.

Participants gave “water” a total of 40 votes:

- 19 blue (valued)
- 21 red (threatened).

**Note:** Water is seen as more threatened than valued.

## **Definition of “Water”**

Participants identified the following meanings associated with “water.”

- Clean, pure
- Essential
- Marshlands
- Recreation
- Nature, plants

- Ice
- Fresh
- Limited
- Drinking
- Export product
- Irrigation
- Sustainable use
- Non-renewable quality
- Great Lakes
- Conservation
- Fishing
- Arctic
- Too much (sometimes) or not enough
- Transportation

### **Resources Sustaining “Water”**

- Water reserves/wetlands
- Great Lakes
- Underground aquifers
- Water testing through health unit
- Educational awareness
- Land use policy
- Rainfall
- Abundance
- Inland waterways
- Conservation authorities
- Ministry of Natural Resources
- Industries
- Joint ownership/partnership with United States
- Food source

### **Threats to “Water”**

- Pollution
- Manufacturing
- Export
- Ecosystem changes (i.e., Carolinian forest, marshlands, stream banks)
- Population density
- Inadequate municipal sewage systems
- Factory farming
- All types of farming
- Golf course
- “Perfect” lawn syndrome
- Winter road maintenance
- Waterfront/lake front homes
- Land use policies lacking
- Personal water crafts
- Zebra mussels, etc.

- Industry
- Food source
- Down loading (i.e., water testing, public to private)
- Stewardship
- Economic decisions (short-term versus long-term)
- Communication between sectors

## Health

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### Individual Rural Asset Ranking

Health appeared in the top five individual rural asset ranking for 74.5% of the participants.

### Large-group Asset Valuing

In the initial large-group session, **Health** was identified as the most significant asset in the “services” asset bundle.

Participants gave “health” a total of 49 votes:

- 34 blue (valued)
- 15 red (threatened).

### Definition of “Health”

Participants identified the following meanings associated with “health.”

- Prevention: education, communication, community services, diet, exercise, environment (air, water, housing)
- Health practitioners: doctors, nurses, alternative medicine, pharmacy, dental, eyes, and availability of these resources
- Hospitals/clinics
- Universality of health care
- Access to health care: timing, transport, economic and emotional health
- Physical/mental

### Resources Sustaining “Health”

- Service clubs, fundraising activities/volunteers/community support
- Community health centre (West Lorne)
- Community Care Access Centres (CCAC)/public health
- Doctors, health practitioners, dentists, pharmacists
- District health councils – strategies
- Patient advocates
- Hospitals
- After-hour clinics (Windsor)
- Emergency departments
- Chap/Steps: transportation for those without transportation

- 911, first aid response, first alert
- Intervention/treatment
- Location – close to London
- Supportive housing in seniors housing

### Threats to “Health”

- Funding for community services (home care)
- Government and individual health plans
- Lack of education (nursing schools, public prevention)
- Hospital closures
- Shortage of medical personnel
- Government policies may not fit rural areas
- Bureaucracy in application of policy
- Shortage of community services; access issues, transportation, no health plan = no coverage; delayed treatment results in more cost to health care system
- Geographic location – attraction of health care professionals – all issues are interrelated, economics, etc.
- There is not as much of a support system in rural communities

## Agriculture

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### Individual Rural Asset Ranking

Agriculture appeared in the top five individual rural asset ranking for 53% of the participants.

### Large-group Asset Valuing

In the initial large-group session, **Agriculture** was identified as the most significant asset in the “economic” asset bundle.

Participants gave “agriculture” a total of 37 votes:

- 24 blue (valued)
- 13 red (threatened).

### Definition of “Agriculture”

Participants identified the following meanings associated with “agriculture.”

- Diversity of land/climate
- Well developed and economically viable
- Diversified and large agriculture sector due to our land, climate, expertise and market proximity
- High-quality safe food and industrial supply, with good growth potential

## Threats to “Agriculture”

- Air quality
- Urbanization: land use, right to farm, consumer perceptions
- Globalization: dollar value, politics, low market prices, reduced support from federal and provincial levels – technical money reduced
- Global warming
- Low commodity prices
- Loss of policy making locally
- Labour availability
- Diminishing interest in family farms
- Industrialization of farming
- Consumer perception and worry
- Consolidation of food industry and input/supply industry
- Increasing capital cost
- Cost and infrastructure for water delivery – greenhouse
- Reducing support from federal and provincial government – agriculture
- Succession planning
- Reducing subsidies
- Resistance to change
- Energy costs
- Dollar exchange (value of Canadian dollar)
- Politics (World Trade Organization)
- Right to farm
- Land use planning
- Lake water levels
- Policy to adjust for agriculture support
- Leads to: consolidation of suppliers, food industry, competition
- Human resources: succession planning, labour and skills, availability, diminishing interest in family farm
- Education and training programs and facilities

## Sense of Community

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### Individual Rural Asset Ranking

Sense of Community appeared in the top five assets ranking for 47% of the participants.

### Large-group Asset Valuing

In the initial large-group session, **Sense of Community** was identified as the most significant asset in the “social” asset bundle.

Participants gave “sense of community” a total of 30 votes:

- 30 blue (valued)
- 0 red (threatened).

## **Definition of “Sense of Community”**

Participants identified the following meanings associated with “sense of community.”

- Feel welcome
- Compassion, caring
- Helping each other, support systems
- Security, trust, open door policy
- Sense of belonging, ownership
- Communities are multi-faceted, e.g., faith community, economic, family, neighbourhood
- Knowing each other
- The feeling of trust, security, belonging, ownership, compassion, and caring as a result of multi-faceted experiences and expertise by the inhabitants and participants of the community

## **Resources Sustaining “Sense of Community”**

- Amalgamation
- Newcomers, new ideas, enlarging population
- Numerous voluntary organizations
- Nurture the future
- Experience and knowledge of seniors, time availability
- Recreational and cultural opportunities: fall fairs, festival of nations
- Tourism
- Educational facilities: Ridgetown College, St. Clair College
- Smaller communities benefiting from larger community assets (amalgamation)
- Family farms enlarge the community as the farms expand
- Youth participation and involvement
- Youth energy and enthusiasm
- Service clubs/groups/organizations, e.g., sports, recreation, heritage, culture, arts, horticultural, etc.
- Public facilities and gathering places
- Democracy: opportunity to have a say and shape the future of the community
- Neighbourhood safety nets, e.g., Block Parents, Neighbourhood Watch, East Side Pride

## **Threats to “Sense of Community”**

- Newcomers – lack of local knowledge and customs
- Declining population/aging population
- Transportation
- Lack of/declining recreational activities
- Decreased volunteerism
- Amalgamation is eroding small community identities
- Ethnicity







